DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 175 264 FL 010 533

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TITLE The Acquisition of English by a Five-Year Old French Speaker.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 29p.; Some pages may be difficult to read because of marginal legibility of original document; Paper presented at the Second Language Research Forum (Los Angeles, California, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Language; *English (Second Language); Error Analysis (Language); *French; Grammar; Interference (Language Learning); *Language Development; *Language Patterns; Language Research; Morphemes; Psycholinguistics; *Second Language Learning; Sentences; Structural Analysis; Synchronic Linguistics

ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes the results of a longitudinal study of a child native speaker of French acquiring English. The observation period covered the child's progress from age 4 years, 9 months to age 5 years, 8 months. An analysis was made of the acquisition of the interrogative and negative structures and of nine grammatical morphemes. In comparing the results with results from other second language (L2) child learners and with those from native language (L1) learners, the following issues are discussed: (1) reliance on previous (L1) knowledge; (2) development of structures from early prefabricated patterns; and (3) universal strategies and processes for L1 and L2 learners. The analysis revealed that: (1) there was a natural progression toward inversion in Wh- questions; (2) in negation, a "no" nucleus stage appeared as in the acquisition of English (L1) but there was no "no plus verb" stage such as that found in the English of many second language learners, especially native speakers of Spanish; and (3) morphology, the order of acquisition correlated with that found for most other second language learners, and the deviations from that order could be explained by L1 interference. (Author/AMH)

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The acquisition of English by a five-year old French speaker

Jeannine Gerbault

INTRODUCTION

During the past few years, there have been several studies of the acquisition of a second language (especially English). Researchers have looked at various areas of syntax in order to discover the characteristics of the learners' performance. Because they are ubiquitous in natural speech, the English interrogative and negative structures, as well as a number of grammatical morphemes, have been the basis for valuable observations on the development of second language patterns.

This paper summarizes the results of an observational study, conducted over an eleven-month period, which reported the natural acquisition of English as a second language by a child native speaker of French.

In previous studies of the syntactic development of a second language, the main issues that have been addressed were: the similarities between first and second language learning (e.g. Ervin-Tripp, Dulay and Burt), the role of language transfer (e.g. Cancino, Rosansky and Schumann, Hakuta), and the commonalities among second language learners (e.g. Dulay and Burt, 1974, Bailey, Madden, and Krashen, 1974, Larsen-Freeman, 1976). All three processes have been determined to play a role in L2 acquisition: 1) universal L1/L2 learning pattern; 2)

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L1 transfer; 3) universal L2 learning pattern. But there still remains to determine in what areas -- more specifically, in what areas of syntax -- each process can be said to play a dominant role.

There has not been, so far, any longitudinal study of the speech of a child native speaker of French acquiring English as a second language. The interaction of English and French in children has been observed in the studies by Swain (1978), Chamot (1978), Ervin-Tripp (1974), Savignon (1974), and Celce-Murcia (1978), and in the St Lambert and OISE projects. But except in Chamot, where the sequence was Spanish, French, English, and in Celce-Murcia, where the acquisition was simultaneous, the sequence of acquisition was L1 English, L2 French. It seems important, however, to provide data from learners of English from different language backgrounds.

The purpose of the present study, therefore, was to determine the developmental sequences in the acquisition of three areas of syntax,-- the interrogative structure, the negative structure, and 9 grammatical morphemes -- to compare these sequences with those in other studies of child acquisition of English (L2), to identify some strategies and processes in second language acquisition, and finally to see if favorable environments for each process might be identified.

SUBJECT

When the subject, Muriel, arrived in the U.S. in October,

1976, at age 4.6, she had no previous knowledge of English. One week after her arrival she enrolled in an English-speaking nursery school, which she attended five mornings a week. Then, in January 1977, she was transferred to a French-English bilingual school, where she attended Kindergarten until June 1977. She entered first grade in that same school in September, 1977. During all this time, French was the dominant language spoken in the home of her French parents.

Muriel is an only child. Therefore, English was the only way she could communicate with her peers in her first three months in Los Angeles. After her enrollment in the bilingual school, English was still her only way to communicate with peers outside of school. She spoke almost no English from October to January. As it has been reported of other children acquiring a second language, Muriel experienced a "silent period". The new school environment seems to have been the impetus for a dramatic change and she made visible progress in English beginning in January 1977. The observation period covers her progress from age 4.9 to 5.8.

DATA COLLECTION

Because I had the advantage of being the subject's mother, I did not have to plan periodical visits and activities in order to gather data. This relationship with the subject had two main results: 1) data were not gathered at regular intervals, but when there was something going on; 2) the language development and attitudes could be observed at any time, and

notes could be taken on the overall picture of the development on a continuous basis. Consequently, the samples sometimes included speech gathered at more than one time. However, except for the very early samples and occasional illnesses, each sample covered approximately a two-week period.

Emphasis was placed on collecting speech in natural situations, that is, almost always, the subject's speech was totally uncontrolled. A certain amount of the data collected consisted of story-telling and games. But there were no such tasks as imitating, translating, or transforming sentences.

The eleven-month period was divided into seventeen samples. Because of the small amount of speech actually produced in the first three months of the study, I included in my notes my own observations as well as Muriel's utterances in English. I found this important if I was to capture any information on her very early stages. The following example will give an idea of the information gathered through note-taking as compared to recording actual speech: during the period that was to become sample 2, Muriel understood a good deal of English, although she produced little. She then inquired about the English word order for the possessive structure, which had struck her as being different from the French word order:

French : la maison de Teresa

English : Teresa's house

She actually stated (in French) that she had perceived the difference. This example of metalinguistic awareness showed that her language processing system had 'taken in' the struc-

ture of the possessive; however, she was by no means ready to produce it.

THE INTERROGATIVE

The acquisition of the interrogative structure by this learner can be characterized briefly by:

a) the use of rising intonation in yes/no questions,

b) the imitation, from the very beginning, of fairly long sentences. This imitation strategy resulted in the early appearance of inverted questions, both WH- and yes/no questions.

What might appear as free variation of inversion reflected in fact at the beginning the alternation of imitated and created sentences. Besides, inversion also occurred in embedded WH- questions of the type: I don't know where is it.

From about sample 14 on, the percentage of inversion seemed to remain consistently high in simple questions, while it was consistently low in embedded questions. In other words, at that point, Muriel seemed to have differentiated between the two types of WH- questions to reach a high degree of accuracy. Inversion in yes/no questions did not seem to follow a similar progression.

Table 1 shows the stages reported in the acquisition of the interrogative structure for five studies and for Muriel. In first language acquisition as reported by Klima and Bellugi (1966), rising intonation was also used to mark yes/no questions, and all questions were consistently non-inverted at

L_1 L_2

Klima & Bellugi	Ravem	Adams	Cancino, Rosansky & Schumann	Huang	ORDER FOR MURIEL
I Qyes/no Nuc. intonation Qwhat / when } S	I rising intonation	I yes/no rising intonation WH + S	I undifferentiation between embedded & non embedded Q: a) WH + S b) variable inversion c) inversion	I rising intonation imitated yes/no & WH-questions inverted	I rising intonation imitated yes/no & WH questions
II Q what / where / when / why } S	II Qwhat S	II Qyes/no with do & can inversion (routines) WH be/S NP	II differentiation between embedded & non-embedded Q	II what / where / whose } be NP	II Qyes/no can NP Qwh { be NP / variable inversion
III Q yes/no inversion Qwh NP Aux V	III Qyes/no inversion Q what / when / where / why } S	III Qyes/no: be / modal } NP Qwh: a few inverted modals; do support; double tense		III Qyes/no NP VP Qwh can NP Qwh variability	III differentiation between embedded & non embedded Qwh variable inversion in Qyes/no

Table 1. Acquisition orders for the interrogative structure.

first. Then inversion appeared first in yes/no questions while WH- questions were still uninverted.

When one compares this development with the development for Muriel, two differences appear:

1) There was no early systematic non-inversion period in Muriel's acquisition of the interrogative.

2) In her speech, regularly inverted yes/no questions did not precede inverted WH- questions.

If we look at second language acquisition research, we find the same general trend as in my results, that is, there is a great deal more variability in inversion than Klima and Bellugi report in first language acquisition, and no clear-cut difference between yes/no and WH- questions.

There seems to be more reliance on memorized -- therefore inverted -- sentences in second language acquisition, which can be attributed to the longer memory span of second language learners. The structure of question forms in the native language does not seem to influence in any significant way the choice of interrogative structures in children's acquisition of English as a second language. From the limited number of studies to date, it would seem that different cognitive development and input differences may be more powerful determinants of the variability than is L1 background.

THE NEGATIVE

Muriel's order of development for the negative structure appears in Table 2. The main characteristics of this develop-

Stage 1 (sample 1)	no Nucleus	no drink milk
Stage 2 (sample 2)	no Nucleus don't "prefabricated" pattern	no this orange I don't know
Stage 3 (sample 3)	no Nucleus don't "prefabricated" pattern not V (40%) be not	no I love you I don't want this I not love you I'm not bad
Stage 4 (samples 4 & 5)	don't "prefab." expanded don't [+ imperative] not V (6%) be not indeterminates	I don't like you don't cry you not do it the water is not finished I don't have any more
Stage 5 (sample 6)	don't, unanalyzed not V (8%) be not aux → {can't, won't}	she don't have her friend you not get out isn't the paper
Stage 6 (samples 7 & 8)	don't, analyzed be not aux → {can't, won't, shculdn't, wouldn't} indeterminates expanded	you didn't do that I'm not your friend
Stage 7 (sample 9)	appearance of negative questions and negative tag questions	don't you remember you are a baby? he's cute, isn't he, hey?

Table 2. Acquisition order for the negative structure.

ment are:

- initial no Nucleus period
- early use of don't
- little use of either no V or not V.

In first language acquisition as reported by Klima and Bellugi (1966), the development was: Stage I - no Nucleus (i.e., no, sentence external); Stage II - no/not, sentence internal; Stage III - auxiliary + negation.

In Muriel's speech, there was no significant use of Klima and Bellugi's Stage II forms, and the early stages were quite short. Figure 1 shows the proportion of negative devices used. We see that don't in learned chunks appeared before not V, but the be not form was used consistently before don't V. Be not was closer to the French word order in the negative. It took Muriel very little time to include don't regularly in her negative sentences with verbs other than be, although French has no equivalent to don't, and it would seem to be the most difficult form to fit into the previous knowledge of language of a French speaker. No + Nucleus had a very short life, and so did not V; these two forms are not found in either L1 or L2 input from native speakers. All of this, on one hand, seems to support the L1 transfer hypothesis, in that, in her choice of negative devices, Muriel relied on the form of negative utterances in French; but on the other hand, it seems that she was also attending to the structure of the English language in much the same way as native speakers do.

The interplay of the two strategies, reliance on L1 and

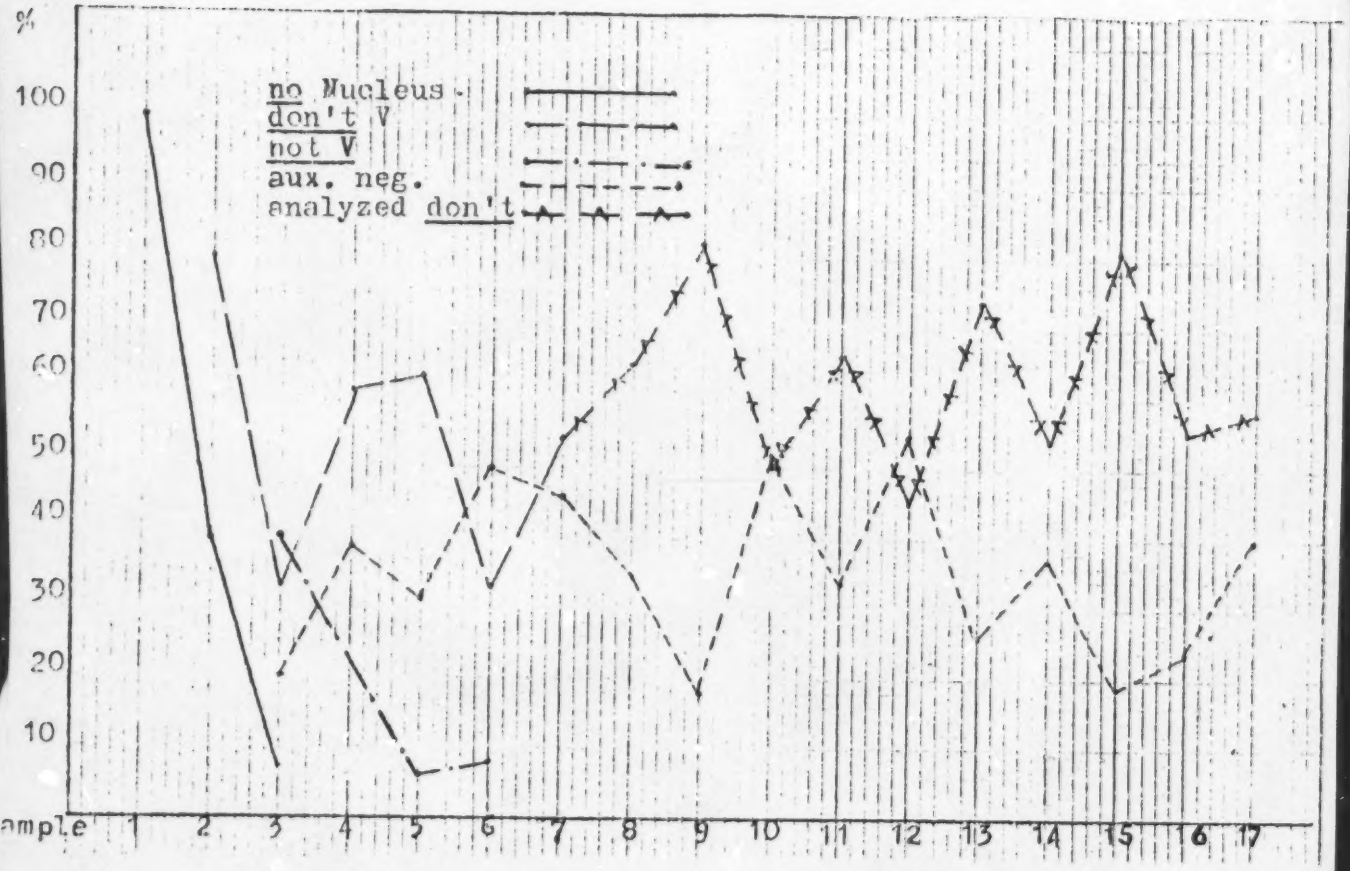

Figure 1. Development of negation showing proportion of each negative device to total negatives in each sample.

direct intake from L2, led to the creation of an interlanguage in which a system could be discerned. First the no Nucleus form appeared alone, then it was supplemented with some use of don't in prefabricated patterns, and, a little later, with not V and be not. When these forms were gathered, Muriel classified them and refined her system. The end of Stage IV seemed to be the basis on which subsequent developments were built; rather than adding forms, development of existing forms took place.

Table 3 shows the stages of acquisition of the negative structures for four studies and for Muriel. When comparing the present analysis with the other analyses in second language acquisition, one can identify two types of patterns: one with a long no V Stage (found for example in Spanish speakers), and the other with a short no V Stage (as in German and Japanese speakers). It would seem that learners whose native languages have pre-verbal negation tend to maintain the no V Stage much longer than those whose native languages have post-verbal (like French and German) or sentence-final (like Japanese) negation. Schumann (1978) organizes and summarizes the findings from learners from different language backgrounds:

> In speakers with native languages that have pre-verbal negation, two forces promote the no V form, 1) natural development, and 2) interference. For speakers with native languages which have either late or post-verbal negation, there is only one force (developmental error) fostering no V forms. Hence in the latter group no V forms are much less frequent and enduring.

Data from more learners and more L1 backgrounds are

L1 | L2

Klima & Bellugi	Milon	Cancino, Rosansky & Schumann	Wode	ORDER FOR MURIEL
I no } Nucleus not }	I no } not } Nuc. no more }	I no V	I no Nucleus	I no Nucleus
				II no Nucleus don't prefab.
			↑ ? ↓	III no Nucleus don't prefab. not V (40%) be not
II NP { no } V { not } { can't } { V prog } { don't }	II NP { aux. neg. { can't { don't { no can	II no V don't V	II no } V not }	IV don't V not V be not indeterminates
				V don't V not V (8%) be not can't won't
III NP aux. neg. indeterminates	III 57% stage I 34% stage II 9% stage III	III analyzed don't	III V { no { not { indeterm. analyzed don't IV don't + indet.	VI analyzed don't be not aux. neg. indet. expanded
				VII negative Q.s

Table 3. Acquisition orders for the negative structure.

needed to test this hypothesis. Also, comparing lengths of stages as well as structures may prove useful; in addition, capturing the very early stages, as was done in this study, would allow a more detailed and accurate description of the developmental process.

It would seem that the native language does have more impact on the sequence of acquisition for the negative than for the interrogative structure. I would suggest that the different operations involved in each structure may account for a differential role of L1. It may well be the case that the (insertion) + inversion operation required in the interrogative structure and the insertion only required in the negative structure make different demands upon the existing linguistic system of the learners; in other words, the 'radical departure' from the L2 statement word order in the interrogative (an order which can be assumed to have been internalized) may trigger a 'radical break' from the L1 system that the negative does not trigger (since it keeps the same NP VP order).

Interrogative:

NP (Aux.) VP

--→ Aux. NP VP

Negative:

NP (Aux.) VP

--→ NP Aux. Neg. VP

It might be worthwhile to test this hypothesis by comparing other pairs of structures in L2 that also involve such different operations as the interrogative and the negative structures.

THE GRAMMATICAL MORPHEMES

In my analysis of the data for this study, I was also concerned with describing the steps through which Muriel reached the correct forms of the grammatical morphemes in English, and with identifying some of the strategies that were used in the process of acquisition. The analysis did reveal such strategies. Because of space constraints, and because it is the area that more readily lends itself to comparisons across studies, I will only report here the accuracy order of Muriel's grammatical morphemes at the end of the data gathering period.

Of the 9 morphemes studied, only 2, the copula and the progressive -ing, were 'acquired' according to Cazden's definition of acquisition. Two sets of morphemes were identified, with a large difference in performance from one set to the other.

Early morphemes	Late morphemes
copula	plural -s
did	3rd pers. sing. -s
past irregular	past regular
progressive -ing	possessive 's
auxiliary be	

This division agrees with the orders reported in other studies, except for plural -s, which ranked consistently higher. (Hakuta's subject is an exception. In her development of English morphemes, plural -s came last, whereas here it comes first among the late morphemes.) Table 4 gives the comparative orders of accuracy for 8 morphemes, and relates the results of the present study with those of other child second-language-acquisition studies. The correlation between each order and the

L_1 L_2

1973 Brown	1974 Dulay & Burt	1975 Hakuta	1976 Cancino	ORDER FOR MURIEL
1. Progr.	1. Copula	1. Progr.	1. Copula	1. Copula
2. Plural	2. Progr.	2. Possess.	2. Progr.	2. Progr.
3. Past ir.	3. Plural	3. Copula	4. Auxiliary	3. Auxiliary
4. Possess.	4. Auxiliary	4. Auxiliary	4. Plural	4. Past ir.
5. Past reg.	5. Past reg.	5. Third Pers.	5. Possess.	5. Plural
6. Third Pers.	6. Past irr.	6. Past ir.	6. Past irr.	6. Third Pers.
7. Copula	7. Possess.	7. Past reg.	7. Past reg.	7. Past reg.
8. Auxiliary	8. Third Pers.	8. Plural	8. Third pers.	8. Possess.

Table 4. Orders of accuracy for 8 grammatical morphemes.

order for Muriel is given in Table 5.

	Brown	Dulay & Burt	Hakuta	Cancino
Muriel	.10	.79*	.33	.79*

* $p < .05$

Table 5. Spearman rank correlation coefficients for eight morphemes.

The comparison is limited here to child studies, and no systematic parallel with adult studies is attempted. However, the orders reported by Bailey, Madden and Krashen (1975), and by Larsen-Freeman (1975) will be referred to where similarities between adult and child learners appear.

Dulay and Burt (1974) stated, from the analysis of results from the Bilingual Syntax Measure, that the acquisition order of morphemes was different for L1 and for L2, but stable across L2 child learners from different language backgrounds.

In the order for Muriel, plural ranked number 5; but we have seen that it was closer to the morphemes acquired later than to those acquired earlier. This position is at variance with the ranks of plural in Brown, Dulay and Burt, and Cancino, where it appeared in the first half. In this respect, the acquisition of plural by Muriel can be compared to its late acquisition by Hakuta's subject. It is interesting to note that nouns are not marked for plural either in Japanese or in French.

In all L2 orders displayed here, the copula came early -- first, except in Hakuta's subject -- whereas it came late

in L1 order.

It does seem that there are more similarities than differences among L2 orderings. To further analyze the relationship between the rankings, I will refer to Bailey, Madden, and Krashen (1974), and to Andersen (1977). Their division into VP, NP, free, and bound morphemes allows for more parallels. Except in Hakuta, plural always came before possessive (plural was reported as unusually late in Uguisu, and possessive as unusually early). One important similarity appears across L2 studies: the first three VP morphemes are the same (copula, progressive, auxiliary), but they are different from the first three morphemes in L1 (progressive, past irregular, past regular); in L1 copula and auxiliary came last.

Table 6 is adapted from Andersen (1977). I have added the implicational orders for Hakuta and Cancino's subjects and for Muriel. One can see that the three VP morphemes occur in only two sequences, one for L1 and one for L2. The appearance of copula and auxiliary before past irregular for L2 gives some support to a hypothesis that was put forward by Felix (1976). Felix postulated that one difference between L1 and L2 acquisition may be that the learner follows a conceptual construction principle (pre-syntactic), whereas the L2 learner follows a syntactic construction principle. As a consequence, there are on one hand more varieties of intended structures used in early L1 than in early L2 acquisition, and on the other hand a much more extensive use of copula structures in L2 acquisition (Felix, 1976). It seems reasonable to extend this

	Free Verb Order	Bound Verb Order	Free NP Order	Bound NP Order
Anderson	COP-AUX-PaI	ING-PaR-3RD	THE-A	PLU-NsN
Bailey, Madden & Krashen (1974)	COP-AUX-PaI	ING——3RD	ART	PLU-NsN
Dulay & Burt (1974)	COP-AUX-PaI	ING-PaR-3RD	ART	PLU-NsN
Fathman (1975)		ING——3RD	ART	PLU-NsN
Larsen-Freeman(1975)	COP-AUX-PaI	ING——3RD	ART	PLU-NsN
Rosansky (1976)	COP-AUX-PaI	ING-PaR-3RD	ART	PLU-NsN
Krashen's "natural order"	COP-AUX-PaI	ING——{PaR / 3RD	ART	PLU-NsN
Hakuta (1975)	COP-AUX-PaI	ING-3RD-PaR		NsN-PLU
Cancino (1976)	COP-AUX-PaI	ING-PaR-3RD		PLU-NsN
Order for Muriel	COP-AUX-PaI	ING-3RD-PaR		PLU-NsN
Adult Frequency	COP-AUX-PaI	ING——3RD-PaR	ART	PLU-NsN
Mean L1 Order	PaI—$COP_u AUX_u$——$COP_c AUX_c$	ING-PaR-3RD	ART	PLU-NsN

Table 6. Free V, Bound V, Free NP and Bound NP Morpheme Implicational Orders.

principle to adult L2 learners, since they are likely to make even greater use of the syntactic versus conceptual construction principle; indeed the order reported for adult learners by Bailey, Madden, and Krashen (1974) and by Larsen-Freeman (1975) is also : 1) copula

2) auxiliary

3) past irregular

for the three free morphemes.

Larsen-Freeman (1975), looking at a variety of child and adult second language studies, grouped morphemes into "top" and "bottom" morphemes, and accounted for the division in terms of frequency of use in native speaker speech. Her two groups were:

TOP	BOTTOM
progressive	past irregular
copula	past regular
auxiliary	third person
plural	possessive

When deviations from this ordering appear one may attribute them to the L1 influence; for example, the plural morpheme is clearly in the bottom part for the Japanese and French learners whose acquisition is reported here.

SUMMARY

Transfer from the first language appears obvious in this analysis as well as in other analyses of children acquiring English as a second language. Transfer can be perceived to have its effects in both positive and negative ways, and to

apply to at least two different levels: 1) the level of general linguistic knowledge, where the notion of language as a system is transferred, and 2) the level of specific structures, where L1 features are transferred to L2. We need to identify in more detail in which specific areas the target language is more sensitive to positive or negative transfer from the native language. One hypothesis has been stated, but the identification of more such instances of transfer -- or absence of transfer-- may permit one to infer possible grammatical contexts which are more susceptible to this phenomenon.

The action of this language learner upon early acquired prefabricated routines seems also to have played an important role in her acquisition process. It can be compared to Hakuta's (1974) subject's strategies, and also, to a certain extent, to the incorporation rules followed by Gough's (1975) subject Homer. Wong-Fillmore (1976) also reported that "formulaic speech" played an important role in her subjects' acquisition of English. All these second language learners, perhaps because of their more advanced cognitive development, were able to memorize, and operate on, long chunks of sentences; and this strategy was productive for all of them.

And finally, the 're-creation' of the language by the learner has been mentioned as taking place in second language learners as well as in first language learners. The creative construction process would view both first and second language learners as having the same innate knowledge about the nature of language, but with L2 learners also having the specific

knowledge of their first language. For L2 learners both these sources would be tapped in forming hypotheses about the L2.

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